

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2653

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 2614

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FOR AF/LOUGHRAN

EO 1162:GDS

TAGS: BEXP, IV

SUBJ: LANG/SODESUCRE CONFLICT

REF: ABIDJAN 2599

1. REFTTEL REPORTED THAT LANG AFRIQUE LOCAL REP, MARION WRIGHT, HAD AGREED TO REOPEN THE IRRIGATION SYSTME AT THE FERKESSEDOUGOU SUGAR COMPLEX. FURHTER DETAILS ON THE MARCH 28 MEETING WITH MISISTER OF AGRICULTURE FOLLOW. (ALSO ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE M. KACOU, SODESUCRE PRESIDENT; M. MAGUEREZ, SODESUCRE SECRETARY GENERAL; M. KWAME KRA, SODESUCRE AGRONOMIST; JOHN FERRITER, ACTING DCM)

2. SAWADOGO OPENED THE MEETING BY "SOCKING IT" TO MR. WRIGHT IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS: "THIS MEETING WILL BE BRIEF: I AM JUST ASKING LANG TO TURN ON THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM TODAY. I CONSIDER LANG'S BEHAVIOR AS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE, BLACKMAIL AND INADMISSIBLE AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE SEEKING TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT. YOU TOOK THE INITIATIVE TO RESOLVE A LEGAL QUESTION BY AN ACT OF AGGRESSION. IT MUST STOP IMMEDIATELY. WE CAN TALK ABOUT OTHER  
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ISSUES TOMORROW."

3. WRIGHT RESPONDED BY STATING THE LANG'S ACTION WAS NOT TAKEN WITH ANY INTENT TO HARM SODESUCRE, BUT TO MOVE TO COMPLETION OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN STRICT ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT AS EXPLAINED BY SODESUCRE PRESIDENT KACOU AND DIRECTOR GENERAL KIGBAFORO THE PREVIOUS WEEK.

4. AFTER A LONG GO-AROUND AS TO WHY LANG/ISC OFFICIALS HAD NOT CONSULTED DIRECTLY WITH MINISTER SAWADOGO REGARDING THE LAND/ SODESUCRE CONFLICT, WRIGHT FINALLY DELIVERED THE PUNCH LINE: "IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE MINISTER HAS AGREED TO SIT DOWN WITH ME TO DISCUSS THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES AND ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT PROGRESS WILL BE MADE TOWARD THEIR RESOLUTION, I WILL ADVISE THE SITE TO RELEASE THE WATER AND LET SODESUCRE HAVE ACCESS TO THOSE AREAS WHICH HAVE NOT YET BEEN ACCEPTED BY SODESUCRE.

5. ON THIS TENSION-BREAKING NOTE, THE MEETING BROKE UP WITH WRIGHT AGREEING TO FLY TO THE SITE ACCOMPANIED BY KRA AND AN EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE TO WITNESS THE REOPENING OF THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM. ALSO, IT WAS AGREED THAT WRIGHT AND MINISTER SAWADOGO, ALONG WITH SODESUCRE OFFICIALS AND JOHN FERRITER, WOULD MEET AT 0900 TOMORROW, MARCH 29, TO DISCUSS THE DETAILS OF LANG'S FINANCIAL CLAIMS.

6. AFTER THE MEETING, IN A BRIEF PRIVATE SESSION WITH MINISTER SAWADOGO AND KACOU, FERRITER EXPLAINED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD LEARNED FROM WRIGHT ONLY MONDAY, MARCH 25, OF LANG'S PLANNED ACTION, AND OUTLINED THE EFFORTS I MADE TO HAVE ISC VP STEIN'S ORDER COUNTERMANDED. THE MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY LANG/ISC HAD ADOPTED SUCH A DRASTIC AND DAMAGING (FOR FUTURE US/GOIC COOPERATION IN AGRIBUSINESS ACTIVITIES) COURSE OF ACTION AT THIS TIME. HE ADDED THAT WRIGHT HAD BEEN LEFT HOLDING THE BAG AND WOULD RECEIVE THE BULK OF THE BLAME EVEN THOUGH HE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE.

7. SHORTLY AFTER THE MEETING I RECEIVED A CALL FROM HOFKER OF ISC. I INFORMED HIM OF THE CONTENTS OF MY TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER SAWADOGO AS WELL AS THE OUTCOME OF THE SAWADOGO/WRIGHT ET AL MEETING. HOFKER SAID HE WAS "SHOCKED" TO LEARN THAT THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM FOR THE UNACCEPTED PORTIONS

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(3,300 HECTARES) OF THE CANEFIELD HAD BEEN TOTALLY SHUT DOWN. "WE HAD MEANT TO BE REASONABLE AND WERE PLANNING TO SHUT DOWN PARCEL BY PARCEL." HOFKER THUS THRUST WRIGHT EVEN CLOSER TO THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR. I PERSUADED HIM THAT THE IMMEDIATE RECALL OF WRIGHT, WHICH HE SUGGESTED, WOULD SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE AT THIS TIME SINCE THE MINISTER VIEWED THE CUTOFF AS A CORPORATE DECISION AND NOT A WRIGHT INITIATIVE. HOFKER AND COMPANY PLAN TO MEET WITH KIGBAFORO IN WASHDC TO DISCUSS WHERE TO GO FROM HERE.

8. COMMENT: FOR THE TIME BEING, THE WATERS (NO PUN INTENDED)  
HAVE BEEN CALMED. BUT THE UNDERCURRENTS OF BAD FEELING ENGENDERED  
BY LANG'S ILL-ADVISED "SABOTAGE" AUGUR ILL FOR A SATISFACTORY  
RESOLUTION OF THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES. ANY FEEDBACK WASHDC  
MAY RECEIVE FROM KIGBAFORY, DAVID MORSE OR LANG/ISC OFFICIALS  
WOULD BE APPRECIATED. WE SHALL FOLLOW CLOSELY THE SAWADOGO/WRIGHT  
DISCUSSIONS AND WILL CONTINUE AS BEFORE TO KEEP A WEATHER EYE OUT  
FOR FURTHER IMPENDING STORMS.  
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